

# **DCF's Position Statement on Parenting of Children by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Adults**

**The State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families (DCF) affirms that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) parents are as well suited to raise children as their heterosexual counterparts.**

DCF strives to advance research-based best practices and sound public policy on behalf of vulnerable children served by our member agencies. We believe every child and youth has a value to society and we envision a future in which families, neighborhoods, communities, organizations, and governments ensure that all children and youth are provided with the resources and supports they need to grow into healthy, contributing members of society.

DCF also values and encourages approaches to child welfare that are culturally competent and responsive to the specific needs of our society's broad and diverse population. Included in DCF's definition of cultural competence is the ability to support children, youth, and families who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex (GLBTI), as well as those individuals who may be questioning (Q) their sexual orientation or gender identity.

DCF has operationalized its support of LGBTQ children, youth, and families by working in partnership with True Colors, Inc. and the Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (CAFAP). Together, DCF, True Colors and CAFAP have created an initiative entitled the Safe Harbor Project. The goal of the initiative is to increase the child welfare system's capacity to meet the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI) children, youth, adults, and families. DCF is actively pursuing this goal by providing education, technical assistance, resource development and dissemination, programmatic coordination, and advocacy to Connecticut's child welfare agencies and the child welfare field.

The exact number of children in America currently being raised by gay, lesbian, or bisexual parents is unknown. Resistance to lesbian and gay rights continues to force many lesbian and gay people to remain silent about their sexual orientation and relationships. But several studies indicate the numbers of children with same-sex parents in America are significant. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are approximately 600,000 same-sex couples in the United States (Simmons & O'Connell, 2003). More than 30% of these couples have at least one child, and over half of that 30% have two or more children. Therefore, parents of the same sex are raising at the least 200,000 children and possibly more than 400,000--in America (these numbers do not include single lesbian or single gay parents). The 2000 U.S. Census also reported that lesbian and gay families live in 99.3% of all U.S. counties (Smith & Gates, 2001). A 1995 National Health and Social Life Survey by E.O. Lauman found that up to nine million children in America have gay or lesbian parents (Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002).

Based on more than three decades of social science research, DCF believes that families with LGBTQI members deserve the same levels of support afforded other families. Any attempt to preclude or prevent gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning or Intersex individuals or couples from parenting, based solely on their sexual orientation, is not in the best interest of children.

DCF, therefore, affirms that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning or Intersex parents are as well suited to raise children as their heterosexual counterparts.

## **Existing Social Science Research Supporting Same-Sex Parenting**

Existing research comparing lesbian and gay parents to heterosexual parents, and children of lesbian and gay parents to children of heterosexual parents, shows that common negative stereotypes are not supported (Patterson, 1995). Likewise, beliefs that lesbian and gay adults are unfit parents have no empirical foundation (American Psychological Association, 1995).

A growing body of scientific evidence demonstrates that children who grow up with one or two parents who are gay or lesbian fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual. Evidence shows that children's optimal development is influenced more by the nature of the relationships and interactions within the family unit than by its particular structural form (Perrin, 2002).

Studies using diverse samples and methodologies in the last decade have persuasively demonstrated that there are no systematic differences between gay or lesbian and non-gay or non-lesbian parents in emotional health, parenting skills, and attitudes toward parenting (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). No studies have found risks to or disadvantages for children growing up in families with one or more gay parents, compared to children growing up with heterosexual parents. Some research has shown that children who live with same-sex parents tend to be better adjusted with reference to what they want to be when they grow up and how they treat the opposite sex in adolescence. This is due to less restrictive traditional gender roles in a same-sex household compared to the typical stereotypes that children who grow up with opposite-sexed parents are forced to observe – where male/female, masculine/feminine, pink/blue roles are often strictly enforced. (i.e., boys can't play with dolls and girls can't play with trucks. However, in today's world, girls can play football and boys can become bakers) (Perrin, 2002). Indeed, evidence to date suggests home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents support and enable children's psychosocial growth, just as well, if not better, than those provided by opposite-sexed parents (Patterson, 1995).

Prevalent heterosexism, sexual prejudice, homophobia, and resulting stigmatization might lead to teasing, bullying, and embarrassment for children about their parent's sexual orientation or their family constellation, restricting their ability to form and maintain friendships. Nevertheless, children seem to cope well with the challenges of understanding and describing their families to peers and teachers (Perrin, 2002). DCF concludes that problems associated with such family formations do not emanate from within the family unit, but

from prejudicial forces on the outside. Children of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning or Intersex parents are better served when society works to eliminate harmful, prejudicial attitudes directed toward them and their families.

## DCF Standards Support Same-Sex Parenting

DCF's policies and standards are consistent with existing research and every major national children's health and welfare organizations opposition to restrictions on gay parenting. These organizations include the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Medical Association (AMA), American Psychiatric Association (APA), American Psychological Association (APA), American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), National Association of Social Workers (NASW), North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). This list of organizations represents the values and beliefs of the over 650,000 members, that there is no reason in which the health, safety, or welfare of a foster or adoptive child might be negatively impacted by being placed with a same-sex couple or LGBTQI single parent.

In fact, DCF has a policy 30-9, *Non-Discrimination of LGBTQI Individuals*, which specifically states: The Department has an obligation to ensure fair, equal, and non-discriminatory treatment of all individuals who identify themselves as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI), in accordance with state laws governing non-discrimination.

The purpose of this policy is to

- ensure that LGBTQI children, youth and adolescents under the guardianship of DCF receive non-discriminatory, safe, affirming and non-detrimental services, which shall include but not be limited to mental health, substance abuse, foster care and adoption, and mentoring services. LGBTQI youth are at higher risks of several health disorders and often do not disclose or discuss sexual orientation and life issues with providers that are not openly supportive
- facilitate recruitment and retention of affirming foster or adoptive parent(s) or mentors, and to ensure that all persons, including LGBTQI individuals, are given consideration equal to all other individuals.

The Department shall not delay or deny mentoring services, or the placement of a child for adoption or into foster care, or discriminate against any person, including

- children, youth and adolescents under its care
- biological, foster or adoptive parent(s)
- mentor(s)
- applicant(s) wishing to become a foster or adoptive parent(s) or mentor(s), who can meet all children's needs on the basis of
  - gender identity/expression
  - marital/partner or cohabitation status
  - actual or perceived sexual orientation.

*Legal References: CT General Statutes 4a-60a, §45a-726a, §46a-60, §46a-6), §46a-64c, §46a-66, §46a-70 to 73 and §46a-81a to 81p*

## Additional Resources

Empirical Studies on Lesbian and Gay Parenting

American Psychological Association, Lesbian and Gay Parenting

American Psychological Association, Resources on Lesbian and Gay Parenting

American Academy of Pediatrics, Technical Report: Co-parent or Second Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents

American Civil Liberties Union, Too High A Price: The Case Against Restricting Gay Parenting

## Books, Articles, and Chapters on Lesbian and Gay Parenting

<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbbs.html>

<http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbart.html>

## Legal and Advocacy Organizations:

Lambda Legal

American Civil Liberties Union Lesbian and Gay Rights Project

Family Pride Coalition

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere

## References:

American Psychological Association (1995). Lesbian and gay parenting. Available online. Washington, DC: Public Interest Directorate.

Child Welfare League of America (1995). Standards of excellence for family foster care services. Washington, DC: Author.

Child Welfare League of America (2000). Standards of excellence for adoption services. Washington, DC: Author.

Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health (2002). Coparent or second-parent adoption by same-sex parents. *Pediatrics*, 109(2), 339-340.

Patterson, C.J. (1995). Sexual orientation and human development: An overview. *Developmental Psychology*, 31(1), 3-11.

Perrin, E.C. (2002). Technical report: Coparent or second-parent adoption by same-sex parents. *Pediatrics*, 109(2), 341-344. Also available online.

Simmons, T., & O'Connell, M. (February 2003). Married-couple and unmarried-partner households: 2000. Available online. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau.

Smith, D.M., & Gates, G.J. (2001). lesbian and gay families in the United States: Same-sex unmarried partner households. Available online. Washington, DC: Human Rights Campaign.

Stacey, J., & Biblarz, T.J. (2001). (How) does sexual orientation of parents matter? *American Sociological Review*, 65, 159-183.